



File Code: 2720; 2770
Date: May 31, 2018

Dear Interested Party:

I am pleased to announce the availability of the Forest Service's Draft Record of Decision (ROD) for the **Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project (B2H Project)** for your review. The Draft ROD describes my proposed decision, as Forest Service Deciding Official, to authorize B2H Project-related actions on 6.8 miles of the Agency Preferred Alternative route on National Forest System (NFS) lands managed by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest (USFS). This route crosses NFS lands west of La Grande, Oregon, and lying west of Interstate 84, within an area designated for power transportation in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The Draft ROD also outlines the rationale for the proposed decision and describes the need to amend portions of the Forest Plan. A predecisional review, or "objection process", for the USFS's Draft ROD will begin soon with the publication of a Legal Notice in the Baker City Herald announcing the 45-day objection filing period. Additional information about the objection process is provided below.

Background

My proposed decision is based on analysis provided in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project, which was released to the public by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), as Lead Agency, last November and adopted by the USFS as a cooperating agency. The BLM signed a decision based on analysis in the Final EIS on November 17, 2017, approving the project on BLM-managed lands. The BLM approved a route-alignment following the Agency Preferred Alternative described in the Final EIS. The BLM will approve a 30-year right-of-way grant, as well as a temporary (i.e. short-term) grant for areas used in construction. As discussed in the Final EIS (page S-64), the Agency Preferred Alternative on federal lands is the alternative route the BLM, in coordination with the cooperating agencies including USFS, believes would fulfill its statutory mission and responsibilities, giving consideration to economic, environmental, technical and other factors. This route was identified by the BLM in coordination with USFS and other cooperating agencies.

As part of the B2H Project, Idaho Power Company (Applicant) would construct, operate, and maintain a 500-kilovolt (kV), overhead, single-circuit, alternating-current electric transmission line and ancillary facilities. The transmission line would be constructed within a 250-foot-wide right-of-way to connect the northern terminus, the Longhorn Substation, a substation planned by Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) approximately 4 miles east of the city of Boardman in Morrow County, Oregon, to the existing Hemingway Substation, west of the city of Melba in Owyhee County, Idaho. The Applicant submitted an initial Application for Transportation and Utility Systems and Facilities on Federal Lands (Standard Form 299) and a preliminary Plan of Development (POD) for the B2H Project to the BLM Vale District Office on December 19, 2007, and to the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest on March 25, 2008.



The purpose of this federal action is to respond to the Applicant's special-use application for construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed transmission line and associated facilities on federal land. The decision outlined in this Draft ROD pertains only to NFS lands. It must be decided if USFS will grant a special-use authorization on NFS lands for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the B2H Project. As part of this decision, USFS must determine the route across NFS lands, identify the specific terms and conditions of any special-use authorization (pursuant to 36 CFR 251.56), and approve needed project-specific forest plan amendments.

Document Availability

The Final EIS and USFS Draft ROD may be viewed or downloaded from the USFS project website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=26709>. They are also available, along with other relevant documents, at <https://www.boardmantohemingway.com/documents.aspx>. If you wish to receive a copy of the electronic documents on DVD, or a hardcopy of the Draft ROD, please notify Dea Nelson. Her contact information is provided at the end of this letter.

Objection Process

This project is subject to pre-decisional administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B, also called the USFS "objection process" for project-level decisions. The objection process provides an opportunity for individuals and organizations to file an objection to a project before the final decision is signed. This allows interested individuals and organizations to advise the Deciding Official about concerns regarding the final decision before the decision is made.

Who may file an Objection?

This is described in detail at § 218.5.

Only individuals or organizations that submitted specific written or oral comments during a designated opportunity for public participation (in this case, during scoping in 2008 and 2010, the Applicant's Community Advisory Process in 2009-2010, or the 90-day public comment period on the draft EIS in 2014-2015) may object.

What must an Objection include?

Objections must meet the requirements of § 218.8.

Minimum requirements of an objection are described at § 218.8(d). An objection must include a description of those aspects of the proposed project addressed by the objection, including specific issues related to the proposed project; if applicable, how the objector believes the environmental analysis or draft decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy; suggested remedies that would resolve the objection; supporting reasons for the reviewing officer to consider; and a statement that demonstrates the connection between prior specific written comments on the particular proposed project or activity and the content of the objection, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the designated opportunities for comment.

Incorporation of documents by reference is not allowed, except for the following list of items that may be referenced by including date, page, and section of the cited document, along with a description of its content and applicability to the objection: 1) all or any part of a federal law or regulation; 2) Forest Service directives and land management plans; 3) documents referenced by the Forest Service in the subject EA; or 4) comments previously provided to the Forest Service by the objector during public involvement opportunities for the proposed project where written comments were requested by the responsible official. All other documents must be included with the objection.

Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted specific written comments regarding the proposed project or activity and attributed to the objector, unless the issue is based on new information that arose after the opportunities for comment. The burden is on the objector to demonstrate compliance with this requirement for objection issues.

How and when can an Objection on the Draft Record of Decision be filed?

Objections can be submitted in writing, either electronically or in hard copy, but must be filed with the Reviewing Officer within 45 days from the date publication of legal notice of the opportunity to object in the *Baker City Herald*. The publication date of the legal notice in the *Baker City Herald* is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Those wishing to file an objection to this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

The reviewing officer for this project is James Peña, Regional Forester, Pacific Northwest Region.

Objections may be sent as follows:

Postal delivery (via USPS) to Reviewing Officer, Pacific Northwest Region, USDA Forest Service, Attn. 1570 Appeals and Objections, PO Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208-3623.

Emailed to objections-pnw-regional-office@fs.fed.us with OBJECTION and "Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project" in the subject line. Electronic objections must be submitted as part of an actual email message, or as an attachment in Microsoft Word (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), or portable document format (.pdf) only. Emails submitted to addresses other than the ones listed above or in formats other than those listed above or containing viruses will be rejected. It is the responsibility of the objector to confirm receipt of objections submitted by electronic mail. For electronically mailed objections, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of receipt, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means;

Hand delivered to Pacific Northwest Regional Office, 1220 SW 3rd Avenue, Portland, Oregon. Hand deliveries can occur between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM, Monday – Friday, except legal holidays; or

Faxed to 503-808-2339, with OBJECTION and "Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project" noted on the cover sheet.

Objections, including names, physical addresses, email addresses, or other personal information provided, will be part of the public record for this proposed action and will be posted to the web.

For additional information concerning this project, the NEPA documents, or how to participate in the predecisional objection and review process, contact:

Dea Nelson, Environmental Coordinator
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
1550 Dewey Avenue, Suite A
Baker City, Oregon 97814
dnelson09@fs.fed.us
541-523-1216

Thank you for your interest in the proposed B2H Project on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

Sincerely,



THOMAS MONTOYA
Forest Supervisor